

Please substitute the following claim:

Claim 21 (Amended):

*a1* A composition comprising a carrier and a nodulation inoculant produced according to the process of claim 1, 22, 23, 24, 25, 26, 27, 28, 29, 30, 31, or 32.

Please add the following new claims:

Claim 22 (New).

A method of producing a nodulation inoculant containing reduced amounts of cell density factor (CDF) comprising:

- a) providing a liquid growth medium suitable for the growth of nodulating bacteria;
- b) adding iron to the liquid medium in amounts sufficient to reduce cell density factor (CDF) expression by said bacteria;
- c) adding nodulating bacteria to said liquid medium; and
- d) culturing the liquid medium containing the added nodulating bacteria to provide a nodulation inoculant.

*a2* Claim 23 (New):

The method according to claim 1, wherein said nodulation inoculant has increased nodulation efficiency as compared to a nodulation inoculant that is not treated with iron.

Claim 24 (New):

The method according to claim 22, wherein said nodulation inoculant has increased nodulation efficiency as compared to a nodulation inoculant that is not treated with iron.

Claim 25 (New).

A method of increasing the nodulation efficiency of a nodulation inoculant comprising the addition of iron to *Bradyrhizobium japonicum* cultures in a liquid medium and growing said cultures, wherein said iron is added in amounts sufficient to reduce the CDF expression in said cultures.

**Claim 26. (New)**

The method according to claim 25, wherein said nodulation inoculant has increased nodulation efficiency as compared to a nodulation inoculant that is not treated with iron

**Claim 27. (New)**

The method according to claim 22, wherein a single species or strain of nodulating bacteria is added to said liquid culture.

**Claim 28. (New)**

The method according to claim 27, wherein a single species of nodulating bacteria is added to said liquid culture.

**Claim 29. (New)**

*a2*  
The method according to claim 27, wherein a single strain of nodulating bacteria is added to said liquid culture.

**Claim 30 (New)**

The method according to claim 28, wherein said single species is *Bradyrhizobia japonicum*.

**Claim 31 (New)**

The method according to claim 29, wherein said single strain is *Bradyrhizobia japonicum* USDA 110.

**Claim 32 (New)**

The method according to claim 29, wherein said single strain is *Bradyrhizobia japonicum* USDA 123.